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Secretary Rice Visit Special Edition

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In Today's Papers

Turkey Denies Troops Entered Northern Iraq
All papers: On Thursday, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said, en route to Sofia to participate in the NATO foreign minister meeting, that the build-up of Turkish troops along the Iraqi border is aimed at preventing the PKK militants from crossing the border and moving into Turkey. "Since the Iraqis don't have enough forces to establish security in the region, they should be happy and help us," Gul maintained. Papers claim Turkish troops have infiltrated 20 km into northern Iraq, carrying out operations in many places. Milliyet says two PKK camps near Amediye in northern Iraq had been destroyed by Turkish jetfighters and artillery, adding that troop transfers to the border area continued. Hurriyet claims in talks in early April, American officials gave the green light for Turks to carry out such cross-border operations. The President of the Kurdistan region, Massud Barzani told Kurdistan TV that Turkish forces had not crossed the border, and warned neighbors not to interfere in Iraq's domestic affairs. Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) officials told Yeni Safak that tripartite security talks among Turkey, Iraq, and the US should be resumed as soon as a new government is formed in Baghdad, and that the US was expected to keep its pledge of "doubling the efforts" against the PKK.

Commentary on Secretary Rice's Visit
Commentators continued speculating about the outcome of Secretary Rice's recent visit to Ankara. "Iran and Iraq,

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including the PKK were the main issues but Secretary Rice refrained from making any commitment" liberal-intellectual

Radikal's foreign affairs columnist Erdal Guven told his readers. Erdal wrote: "There is an unspoken truth about Turkish-American relations. Even though Turkey is considered to be an ally, the US does not feel obliged to make an active commitment to fight against the PKK because of Ankara's position during the Iraq war. Moreover, the growing anti-Americanism at both the political and popular levels is not helping make Washington feel the need for such an obligation. Secretary Rice did not make any commitment on that issue, nor did she give a calendar for action. In the end, the Rice visit did not seem to make a positive contribution on the hottest issue between Turkey and the US."

Characterizing US-Turkish relations as "sleeping with the bear," Oguzhan Muftuoglu wrote in the leftist Birgun : "The statements from Secretary Rice and Turkish Foreign Minister Gul provided a clear indication of Ankara's commitment to support the American actions on Iran. It seems that Ankara will not make the same mistake, the parliamentary motion accident [the March 1, 2003 vote] if you will, when and if the US launches a military operation against Iran. The rhetoric shows that both Turkey and the US are currently basing bilateral relations on that understanding. Rice underscored during the press event that she and Gul have shared the same views on the Iran issue - an expression that was more than just an ordinary diplomatic statement."

Turkey's MGK Discusses Iraq, the PKK

All papers: In a meeting lasting more than five hours, the Turkish National Security Council (MGK) discussed security measures against the PKK, the threat of fundamentalism in the country, and a Turkish government report on Iraq. The MGK gathering said measures must be taken in order to bolster the economic, social and cultural structure in southeastern Turkey. The MGK noted that US failure to

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crackdown on the freely moving PKK militants in northern Iraq, and the logistic support extended by the KDP and PUK, northern Iraqi Kurdish parties, to the PKK has played a role in the comeback of the terrorist organization in southeast Turkey. On Iraq, the MGK said the status of the oil-rich northern Iraqi town of Kirkuk must be agreed on by all the groups in the country.

After Kirkuk, Northern Iraqi Kurds Eye Tal Afar

Cumhuriyet cites on its front page a news commentary in the Christian Science Monitor which claims the Kurds in northern Iraq, who have already taken control of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk through population transfers, are now attempting to do the same thing in the northern Iraqi Turkmen town of Tal Afar, in an effort to establish a link with the Kurdish region in Syria, which is essential in attaining the goal of "Greater Kurdistan."

Turkish Opposition Criticizes New Anti-Terror Bill

All papers report the main opposition CHP and the Turkish military believe Article 6 in the new anti-terror bill should be removed because it would open the way for the imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan to seek amnesty. Papers comment the ruling AK Party government is looking to remove the article in the face of such pressure. Justice Minister Cemil Cicek rejected claims that the bill will work in a way to enable the release of Ocalan, lashing out at the CHP for distorting the facts.

US Ships in Eastern Mediterranean

Cumhuriyet reports the USS Theodore Roosevelt and an unidentified US warship have docked offshore Turkey's port city of Iskenderun in the eastern Mediterranean. Turkish authorities turned down the USS Roosevelt Commander and some other high-level military officers who requested a port visit to Iskenderun to allow the crew to tour the city. Both US aircraft are to join a US exercise to be held in international waters in the eastern Mediterranean on May 24-

26, the dates set for the visit of the Iranian President Ahmadinejad to Turkey.

TV Highlights
NTV (7 a.m.)

Domestic News

- Turkish National Security Council (MGK) convened Thursday to discuss terrorism in southeast Turkey and Iran.
- Turkish military conducts air exercises with F-16 and F-4 jetfighters in the central Turkish province of Konya.

International News

- Foreign Minister Gul attends NATO foreign ministers meeting in Sofia to discuss Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Kosovo.
- The US House of Representatives Wednesday night accepted by 397 votes against 21 tough sanctions on Iran.
- Azeri President Aliyev, in Washington to meet with President Bush, told a press conference Azerbaijan will not join any military action against Iran.
- Hezbollah's Secretary General Sayed Hasan Nasrallah has acknowledged in an interview with a Lebanese daily support for Palestinian militants.

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